

MAY 31, 1978

SOUR NOTES IN THE ITALIAN MUSIC WORLD
(VOICED PIECE IN TAPE LIBRARY)

INTRO:

THE ITALIAN MUSIC WORLD IS IN A STATE OF TURMOIL OVER THE ARREST OF TWENTY-NINE PERSONS IN CONNECTION WITH ALLEGED FINANCIAL CORRUPTION. V.O.A.'S DAVID LENT IN ROME HAS EXAMINED SOME OF THE ISSUES AND FILED THIS REPORT.

VOICE:

ONE OF THE ISSUES IS THE USE AND METHOD OF PAYMENT OF EXPENSIVE FOREIGN ARTISTS SUCH AS THE WORLD FAMOUS SOPRANO BIRGIT NILSSON. (OPT) (NILSSON SINGING)

TAPE: -- MISS NILSSON, IN A MAGNIFICENT PERFORMANCE OF PUCCINI'S "GIRL OF THE GOLDEN WEST" FROM THE STAGE OF LA SCALA OPERA HOUSE IN MILAN. (END OPT) MISS NILSSON IS, OF COURSE, NOT INVOLVED IN THE ARREST OF TWENTY-NINE FIGURES ASSOCIATED WITH THE ITALIAN MUSIC WORLD. BUT A SUIT FILED BY THE LAWYER HUSBAND OF AN ITALIAN SOPRANO, SILVIA SEBASTIANI, OVER HIRING PRACTICES LED EVENTUALLY TO THE ARRESTS AND EARLY MORNING RAIDS TUESDAY OF SUCH PROMINENT FIGURES AS THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE ROME OPERA HOUSE AND THE PRODUCTION DIRECTOR OF MILAN'S LA SCALA. ALSO BEING HELD ARE COMPOSERS AND THEATER AGENTS. AS OF EARLY WEDNESDAY, HOWEVER, NONE HAD BEEN CHARGED. THE ARRESTS WERE MADE IN CONNECTION WITH ALLEGED EXTORTION, CORRUPTION IN OFFICE AND FRAUD. THE CHARGES STEMMED FROM A TWO-YEAR INVESTIGATION BY ITALY'S FINANCIAL POLICE BASED ON THE FAILURE OF THE ITALIAN MUSICAL WORLD TO ABIDE BY THE PROVISIONS OF A NINETEEN SIXTY-SEVEN LAW. THE LAW REQUIRES ITALY'S OPERA HOUSES, WHICH ARE LARGELY SUPPORTED BY STATE SUBSIDIES, TO ELIMINATE AGENTS IN CONTRACTING FOR THE SERVICES OF ARTISTS. THE LAW PROMISED TO

CREATE A STATE ORGANIZATION TO REPLACE PRIVATE AGENTS. HOWEVER, THE ORGANIZATION NEVER GOT INTO BUSINESS. THE SEBASTIANI SUIT CHARGES THAT USE OF AGENTS HAS LED TO THE USE OF FOREIGN ARTISTS INSTEAD OF ITALIANS. IT IS BEING CHARGED THAT FOREIGN ARTISTS HAVE RECEIVED PADDED FEES WHICH ENABLED ITALIAN THEATER MANAGEMENT TO EXPORT ITALIAN CURRENCY ILLEGALLY. BUT THE CHARGES OF CORRUPTION GO MUCH FURTHER. IT IS CHARGED THAT ITALIAN SINGERS COULD NOT TREAD THE BOARDS WITHOUT PAYING BRIBES, AND OTHERS ARE CHARGED WITH EMBEZZLEMENT OF STATE FUNDS. FOURTEEN MILLION DOLLARS ARE SPENT EACH YEAR SUPPORTING ITALIAN OPERA. AS WAS TO BE EXPECTED IN A COUNTRY WHICH TAKES ITS MUSIC VERY SERIOUSLY, CONTROVERSY IMMEDIATELY BOILED UP OVER THE ARRESTS. OPERA CRITICS ON WEDNESDAY SAID THOSE ARRESTED ARE VICTIMS OF A GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRATIC BLUNDER. COMMENTING ON THE NINETEEN SIXTY-SEVEN BAN ON THE USE OF AGENTS, THE RIGHTIST CENTER NEWSPAPER "JOURNALI" ASKED, "DOES THE ITALIAN LEGISLATOR IMAGINE THAT KARAJAN OR BERNSTEIN SPENT THEIR TIME ANXIOUSLY ON THE PHONE CALLING ROME OR MILAN TO LET THEATERS KNOW THAT THEY ARE FREE ON THIS OR THAT DATE?" ANOTHER CRITIC SAID THAT OPERA DIRECTORS HAVE FACED THE DILEMMA OF EITHER BREAKING THE LAW OR CLOSING DOWN THEIR HOUSES. (OPT) TAPE: MORE NILSSON SINGING AND FADE FOR. (END OPT)

VOICE:

DOES THIS MEAN THAT AFICIONADOS OF LA SCALA WILL NEVER AGAIN HEAR THE LIKES OF BIRGIT NILSSON ON THAT PRESTIGIOUS STAGE? THERE IS TOO MUCH SOUND AND FURY IN ITALY TODAY TO DISCERN THE ANSWER. A PROSECUTOR SAYS THAT IN MAKING THE ARRESTS, THE GOVERNMENT HAS BROUGHT TO LIGHT THE MAFIA OF THE BELCANTO BUT ONE ITALIAN SOPRANO AT LA SCALA SAID TARTLY, "I AM DISGUSTED."